Considerations humbly offer'd to the Honourable [illegible] of the House of Commons, relating to the Bill now before the House, for Preventing the Licentiousness of the Press.

It is humbly presumed, that the Scope and End of such a Bill is to prevent the Printing and Publishing of any Books or Pamphlets, tending to the Debauching the Minds of the People, with relation either to Religion, the Government, or good Manners; and that whoever shall presume to Print or Publish any thing which shall apparently conduce to such Ill Ends, shall be punish'd as the Fact deserves.

This it is, humbly supposed, was the Scope and Design of an Act made in the 14th Year of K. *Charles* II. and reviv'd in the 1st of K. *James* II. and them Laws having miss'd of Answering the End was design'd by them, I hope I may expect Pardon, if with all Humility and Submission to better Judgments, I exert my weak Endeavours, to shew some of the Causes why those Laws proved so ineffectual, to the End design'd.

The First and Greatest Cause, I humbly presume, was the Putting so great a Part of the Administration of that Act in the Hands of the *Company of Stationers*: For, with Submission, the Ends of the Government, and the Ends of that Company are very different: For, the Leading Members of that Company having engrossed Copies of the most useful Books in their own Hands; the End they aim at, is under the Pretence of Serving the Government, to have a Power to suppress Books which shall any way interefere with such Copies they already have: Which, should an Act pass in the same Manner the former was, they may easily do, by pretending that any Books which treat on the same Subject (tho' never so much improved) as theirs do, are Incroachments on their Property; under which specious Pretences, the State of Learning will be crampt; and no Abreviations (which it must be allow'd, are very convenient for those Persons whose Purses may not reach large Volumns) will be allow'd.

Secondly, Another Consequence of making any Law which may favour the Designs of these Men, will be, that the most useful and necessary Books being in the Hands of some particular Members of that Company, or in the Hands of the whole Company (by which they mean about Half a Score Leading Men) such are School-Books, *&c.* will be raised to an extravagant Price; taking in the Time the former Acts were in Force for Example, when such Books were sold for 2 or 3 times more than they (a large Profit allow'd) were really worth: I will leave it to the Judgment of our wise Senators, how far this Practice tends to the Hindring the necessary Education of Children; when a poor Parent might have a Book for that Purpose for Two Groats, which after their Avarice is satisfied, cannot be afforded him for double the Money: But this, as one that truly understands the Mischiefs attended by the former Acts, I aver, That by such Extortion, the *London* Printers lost the Printing of many Thousands of Reams of Paper, the Binder of binding so many Books, and the Bookseller of selling them: Vast Quantities of such common sale Books being printed in *Holland*; and the farther Parts of *England*, *Scotland* and *Ireland* chiefly supplied from thence, to the Impoverishing some Hundreds of our own Subjects concern'd in Printing, Binding, and Selling Books to no [illegible] End, but raising an extravagant Profit to Half a Score Men.

Then again, An Act that should so far Restrain the Press, as to hinder the Printing of vast Quantities of innocent and useful Books, under the specious Pretences of Encroachment upon Property; as was the Case under the former Acts, would starve half the Printers, Binders, and Sellers of Books in Town: And I leave it to your Consideration, how far the Poverty of these People may contribute to the Printing and Dispersing seditious and unlawful Pamphlets, when under the Influence of such an Act, they will have little else, but now and then such a Job to trust to.

But, Lastly, If one may judge what will be by what hath been, then one may imagine such an Act will never answer the End design'd. For let any Man recollect the Times in which there was such Acts in force, he will find no Times ever so full of virulent Pamphlets, against the then Governments; and it might very well be so, when such Men were entrusted with the Execution of those Acts, who had an Interest, Scope and Design different from the Government: 'Tis true, they might narrowly look, that no Body printed any Pamphlets but themselves.

But, 'tis certain, in those Times many wicked Pamphlets did come abroad, and 'tis as certain, that many principal Members of the Company, who were entrusted by the Government, to see after the Printing such Things, printed them themselves; this hath been proved Matter of Fact: They had the Priviledge to Search every Body, but none to Search them; by this Means they had the Opportunity of getting now and then a good round Sum for a Party-Pamphlet; and the Ends of the Governments were wholly subverted, while these Men could have a fellow-feeling one with another: And if at any time they did happen to Search one another's Houses, they were so civil, to send Word over Night, or at least, not complain of a Brother, while a poor indigent Wretch that work'd a Pamphlet for Bread, should be sure to be dealt with to the Extremity of the Act; I suppose to let the World see it was not made in vain.

'Tis certain, the Preventing the Printing ill Pamphlets, is very necessary for the Peace of the People and Government; but, I humbly conceive, it not to be the proper Way to prevent the Printing such Books, by so Cramping the whole Trade in general, that Multitudes of People belonging to Printing, Binding, and Selling Books, will have great part of their lawful Livelihoods taken away from them, and thereby be exposed to the Temptation of concerning themselves with unlawful Pamphlets.

These Considerations, worthy Patriots, might be much enlarged in every Particular, had the Author had Time for it; but he hopes these rude and undigested as they are, will have some Regard shewed to them, being addrest to Persons of such profound Judgments, as need not the Influence of Oratory, which the Author acknowledges himself utterly unfurnish'd with; professing himself an utter Enemy to all Seditious and Treasonable Libels, and only aims at the Discovery of the Designs of a Parcel of Men, who under the Pretence of Suppressing such ill Books, and Serving the Government, design only the Inriching themselves, tho' to the Impoverishing some Hundreds.

FINIS.